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7 June 1963

COORDINATION DRAFT

CIA MEMORANDUM

SUBJECT: President Bosch and Internal Security in
the Dominican Republic

SUMMARY

1. President Juan Bosch rightly considers that he has a popular mandate to bring about a radical transformation of political, economic, and social conditions in the Dominican Republic. He hopes to accomplish this purpose by measures compatible with the Alliance for Progress, notably by increased private foreign investment (in preference to US governmental aid) and by regulations ensuring a more equitable distribution of earnings than has been the case hitherto. To privileged elements in Dominican society, Bosch's program seems downright communistic.

2. With reason, Bosch believes that the principal immediate threat to the accomplishment of his mission is the constant possibility of a reactionary coup. In these circumstances, he has been remarkably tolerant of the organizational and agitational activities of Communist elements--so long as they

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have not been directed against him. He argues that to crack down on these activities would only provoke a campaign of urban terrorism and guerrilla resistance like that in Venezuela, which would hinder the accomplishment of his constructive purposes.

3. Bosch understands that the security of his regime depends ultimately upon continued US support, particularly as a restraint upon the Dominican military. At the same time, he is nationalistic, egotistic, and astutely aware of the political inexpediency of appearing to be a US puppet. Consequently, he is not readily amenable to US advice regarding his policy with respect to Communist activities.

4. The Communist danger in the Dominican Republic is not immediate, but potential. It is none the less serious. Given present freedom to organize and agitate, the Communists will become better prepared to exploit some future opportunity. If, through administrative ineptitude, Bosch should fail to satisfy the expectations of the Dominican masses, or if he should be overthrown by a reactionary coup, the Communists will be in position to seize the leadership of the popular revolutionary movement.

-2-

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DISCUSSION

President Bosch and His Purposes

5. Juan Bosch has spent most of his life in exile. An early foe of the Trujillo regime, he became closely associated with the Caribbean school of the "Democratic Left," including President Betancourt of Venezuela, former presidents Figueres of Costa Rica and Arevalo of Guatemala, and Governor Munoz Marin of Puerto Rico. He spent most of his time in exile as a teacher and writer, but was also actively engaged in various conspiracies against the several Caribbean dictatorships.

6. Bosch's political attitudes are conditioned by this background of experience. It has prepared him to function as an eloquent protagonist, but not as an efficient administrator of public affairs or as a politician adept in the accommodation of various political interests. Bosch is a professed revolutionist against the traditional order in Caribbean society. He is also a professed democrat--but, as is the case with many new rulers in countries which have never known representative government, his concept of democracy is mass support for his one-man leadership. In the light of his own experience of

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Caribbean intrigue, he is not only deeply suspicious of any manifestation of political opposition, but even indisposed to share power with colleagues of any stature.

7. Bosch rightly considers that he has a popular mandate to bring about a radical transformation of political, economic, and social conditions in the Dominican Republic. In a free election held in December, 1962, he won nearly 60 percent of the presidential vote, gaining a two-to-one advantage over his principal opponent, a conservative. His party, the Partido Revolucionario Dominicano (PRD), won overwhelming control of the legislature. Insofar as the electoral process confers authority, Bosch has a free hand to accomplish his purposes. The weakness of his position is that he does not have effective personal control over the armed forces and the national police.

8. The principal accomplishment of Bosch's "hundred days" has been the formulation and promulgation of a new constitution. In keeping with Bosch's reformist purposes, the tenor of this document has been very disturbing to the traditionally privileged elements in Dominican society. The Church, for

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example, has been offended by omissions and provisions in effect separating Church and State. Provisions of the original draft on proprietary rights and worker-management relations have been modified in such a way as to leave the specifics to future legislation, but the implication of an impending "syndicalist" development remains.

9. Bosch has shown hostility toward special concessions to foreign corporations which he deems to be an impairment of Dominican sovereignty, but nevertheless hopes to accomplish economic development and social amelioration primarily by attracting foreign private investment. He considers that US governmental aid should be merely supplemental to such investment, an attitude quite rare in Latin America. He hopes to attract private investment by balancing the budget, by paying off existing foreign obligations, and by a program of public works to be financed through a new line of credit recently obtained from a consortium of US and European firms. In this Bosch has been greatly aided by the current high price of sugar in the world market.

Opposition on the Right

10. Juan Bosch came late to the Dominican political scene. While he was safe in exile, other men,

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at the risk of their lives, endured the Trujillo tyranny, overthrew it, and made possible the free election which brought Bosch to power. Such men naturally resent their own displacement and Bosch's authoritarian tendencies. Moreover, many of them are sincerely concerned about the political trend in the Dominican Republic.

11. Rightist opposition presents no political threat to Bosch's position. The Right was soundly defeated in the 1962 election. The conservative political party--the Union Civica Nacional (UCN)--is apparently breaking up as the result of a policy dispute between its right and left wings. The danger to Bosch from the right is that he does not have effective personal control over the armed forces and the national police. A military move to depose him might be instigated by disaffected civilians who see their vested interests threatened by his reformist programs, or by the personal ambition of a military leader. The principal deterrent to such a move is the well-known attitude of the US in support of the duly elected constitutional government.

12. For the present, Bosch appears to be on good terms with the military high command. He has

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pledged himself to respect their control of the armed forces, and their perquisites, and they in turn have engaged themselves to respect his constitutional position. However, neither party to this agreement can be fully confident of the other; the relationship is a wary and uneasy one. Bosch's tentative approach toward the development of a peasant militia must have stirred some military resentment and suspicion. Moreover, it is uncertain whether the military high command is capable of controlling its subordinates.

13. The national police are controlled by General Antonio Imbert, one of the assassins of Trujillo and consequently a national figure in his own right. Several times Imbert has moved tentatively toward seizing power for himself and has been dissuaded only by strenuous US representations. Bosch greatly fears Imbert's ambition, but dares not attempt to remove him.

14. There is currently under way a campaign to discredit Bosch by charging that he is himself a crypto-Communist engaged in establishing a Communist dictatorship, or else that his ineptitude will lead to a Communist seizure of power in the Dominican

-7-

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Republic. There is in fact no evidence that Bosch is himself a Communist--that charge is actually a matter of tenuous inference from the alternative charge, to which Bosch is indeed vulnerable (see below). The recent concerted propagation of this theme, however, suggests a deliberate effort to win US sanction for a military coup against Bosch.

Bosch and the Communists

15. Since taking office, Bosch has permitted the return of a considerable number of Communist leaders expelled from the Dominican Republic by the predecessor regime, the interim Council of State. He has allowed these trained and dangerous men complete freedom of organizational and agitational activity--so long as their attacks were directed against the old regime and not against him--and in some cases he has actually facilitated these activities.

16. Confident of his own popular strength, Bosch sees no threat to his regime in this Communist activity. He may consider that his tolerance demonstrates this strength and the democratic character of his rule. He probably welcomes any assistance in discrediting the traditional society and any potential support in resisting a possible military coup. His

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own explanation of his remarkable tolerance is that to crack down on present harmless Communist activities would only provoke urban terrorism and guerrilla resistance like that in Venezuela ("Betancourt's mistake"), to the great hindrance of his constructive program, the success of which will defeat the Communists. However, when some Communists ventured to call a strike of government workers, Bosch's reaction was immediate and effective.

17. Present Communist strength in the Dominican Republic is not formidable. There are four Communist or quasi-Communist political organizations: (1) the Partido Socialista Popular Dominicano (PSPD), the orthodox Communist party; (2) the Partido Nacionalista Revolucionario (PNR), a heterodox Communist party; (3) the Movimiento Popular Dominicano (MPD), a Communist-dominated pro-Castro party; and (4) the Agrupacion Politica Catorce de Junio (APCJ, or 14th of June), a Communist-infiltrated pro-Castro party. All told, these four groups have about 4,000 members. An effort is being made to combine them in a united front, but so far the 14th of June group has avoided close identification with the others.

18. President Bosch understands that the security of his regime depends ultimately upon US

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support, particularly as a restraint upon the Dominican military--and that his tolerance of Communist activities is a sensitive issue. At the same time, he is nationalistic, egotistic, and astutely aware of the political inexpediency of appearing to be a US puppet. Consequently, he is not readily amenable to US advice regarding his policy with respect to Communist activities. Although he may accommodate to US demands in incidental matters, he is not likely to proscribe all Communist activities unless and until convinced that they are a direct and immediate threat to his regime.

19. The Communist danger in the Dominican Republic is not immediate, but potential. It is none the less serious. Given present freedom to organize and agitate, the Communists will become better prepared to exploit some future opportunity. If, through administrative ineptitude, Bosch should fail to satisfy the expectations of the Dominican masses, or if he should be overthrown by a reactionary coup, the Communists will be in position to seize the leadership of the popular revolutionary movement.

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